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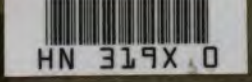

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THREE LECTURES

ON

ENGRAVING:

DELIVERED AT THE SURREY INSTITUTION

IN THE YEAR 1809:

BY ROBERT MITCHELL MEADOWS.

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PREFACE.

TO every Admirer of the Fine Arts, it must be a subject of regret, that the ingenious Author of the following Lectures did not live to complete the series he intended to deliver. His professional abilities, general information, probity of character, and simplicity of manners, united to a cultivated and poetic taste, gave reason to expect that a subject so interesting to refinement, would have been elucidated by him in the most satisfactory manner. His intention was to have taken a copious view of the different modes of Engraving, and to have compared and pointed out their respective excellences and defects. That his plan has remained uncompleted is the more to be lamented, as there has long existed a dispute between the Line and Chalk Engravers respecting the superiority of the manner they pursue, which in too many instances has been conducted with an asperity disgraceful to each party. On this subject we do not consider ourselves equal to give an opinion. When Mr. Meadows became a pupil to Mr. Strutt, he practised both manners; but after the most mature deliberation, gave a decided preference to the latter, in which opinion he continued to the end of his life.

Chalk Engraving, from its very name, implies a representation of drawings made in chalks; and the finest specimens of its powers and application are to be found in the celebrated Academic figures designed by Bouchardon: but this art has so far wandered from its original intention, that without referring to its first mode of application, the term has no precise signification. The print of Mrs. Siddons after Reynolds, however different, may be completely considered as a chalk engraving; although some would produce it as the finest example of the mixed manner.

The business of Engraving is to give a faithful representation of the painting to be copied; and in all the great essentials required for this end, the two modes are nearly equal. Outline, light and shadow, variety of stile, and the representation of different surfaces, are within the power of each. In some instances the advantages will be with one mode, and in others with the other. What man of feeling ever wanted the Maria of Sterne in rhyme, or the L'Allegro of Milton in blank verse? the Felina engraved by Collier, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, in lines; or the Lear by Sharp, after West, in chalk? A great master breathes a soul into the materials he works with, that leaves taste nothing to wish for. Had the question amongst the engravers been, what objects would be most naturally, and picturesquely given by the different modes? A mixed style might have been adopted, which many excellent judges of art have contended would be superior to either; in proof of which we may refer to the series of portraits by Morin after Vandyke.

When Chalk Engraving was first introduced into this country, its partisans insisted on its decisive superiority over the Line; of late, fashionable amateurs have given a contrary decision; and in both instances the multitude, who never think for themselves, have blindly followed those who had the presumption to take the lead: the engravers have arranged themselves on the side most conducive to their interests, and the publisher, waiting the tide of popular prejudice, lay upon his oars ready to join the stronger party. In all this

disgraceful contention, sound art with each party has equally been lost sight of; whilst the direction, clearness and regularity of lines with the one, and the placing dots at mechanical distances with the other, became the petty distinction which usurped and swallowed up better and more dignified considerations. The engravers entered warmly into these trifling distinctions, and thought only of the means, whilst they lost sight of the end: hence have followed a swarm of mechanics, and a dearth of artists; a number of fine toolmen that cannot delineate a limb, and a smooth and laborious mode of execution, which in too many instances have destroyed the true spirit and essential principles of genuine art. Unremitting patience, and a microscopic eye, have become the first qualifications of an engraver; and his productions have been valued, like a tesselated pavement, for the portion of smoothness and quantity of labour they contain.

Mezzotinto Engraving happily admits of very little display of the tool, and whilst the chalk and line engravers are directing the force of their minds to the labours of mechanism, they are forsaken by Science, who has taken up her abode amongst a class of professors whose art kindly keeps them aloof from such puerile attempts. We are far from asserting that there are not amongst both chalk and line engravers, men whose minds have been better directed; but the mass have lost even the merit of attempting to extricate themselves from the wilderness of error into which their leaders have deluded them.

Had the Chalk-engravers been content with combating the natural difficulties of their art, they had rivalled, if not surpassed their more successful brethren; for prejudice must allow that their style admits of a greater variety of surfaces than mezzotinto; and from the few difficulties attending its execution, their minds had a greater portion of energy left to aim at the grand principles of art.

What injury this wretched dispute on mere mechanical execution has occasioned, it is impossible to calculate. We fear however that we are too much war-

ranted in asserting that the aim of the engravers has generally been directed to a meretricious object; and the taste of the public vitiated. Infinite have been the attempts to rival a Wille, but how few have contended with Gerard Audran! The Wolfe and the La Hogue by Woollett, the Infant Academy and Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse by Haward, and the Count Ugolino by Dixon, will for ever receive the meed of honour from men of real taste, without considering the means used for raising these glorious structures.

We are far from contending that a considerable degree of finish is not necessary in every engraving, and that some subjects may not more successfully be given in one manner than another. Our censure only falls on those who consider mere mechanism as capable of performing a great work, or on those who, finding one containing scientific principles, lose sight of all that is good in such a work, in prying after mere execution and manner. Let the productions we have mentioned, be placed at such a distance as will enable the eye to take in the general effect, and the keenest sight will not have the power of detecting the means that have produced them; but the critic in stile must "inspect a mite" though he cannot "comprehend a heaven."

The prints of the Venus after Westall, and the Duke of Leeds after Lawrence, engraved by Mr. Meadows, contain as many beauties, and as much elegance of execution, as legitimate taste can require in any mode of engraving whatever. They may be ranked between the loose style of Bartolozzi, and that degraded manner of chalk engraving, whose only aim on every occasion, is the representation of shagreen cases. They will necessarily want something of the loose and masterly freedom of the one, whilst they avoid the glaring stiffness and unartistlike monotony of the other, and to the lovers of execution may fairly be exhibited as the perfection of tooling in the art he followed. The ingenuity of this valuable artist and highly respectable man, might possibly have given still greater beauty of execution; but, had he attempted it, we are well assured that the energy of his mind had been dis-

tracted by a lesser object, and by paying too much attention to that, he would have lost sight of what ought to have been his ultimate aim, and thereby have run into the error we think we have so justly deplored.

When these LECTURES were delivered, the Subscribers to the Surrey Institution not only expressed the highest approbation of their merit, but several of them requested they might be published; a sanction so honourable, added to the opinion we entertain of these discourses, will, we hope, warrant us in submitting them to the Admirers of the Fine Arts. We would only remark that the love with which Mr. Meadows cultivated, and the industry with which he pursued his profession, allowed him little time for the study of literary composition. They were principally written under the pressure of that sickness which terminated his existence, and all the uncomfortable circumstances into which it reduced him. They are given to the world nearly as he left them. If this will not disarm the asperity of the critic, let him remember that the author "cannot hear," and that he rests in that narrow cell, into which neither praise, nor censure, can gain admission.

The strict sense of moral rectitude which actuated this excellent man, ever urged him to give a greater finish to his works than his prices justified. With such feelings, he could not be affluent at the best of times; and that delicacy of mind, which led to the elegances of art, added all the poignancy of suffering to his situation. England! happy England! the little portion of this great terraqueous Globe where Liberty has taken her last stand and defence, and under whose genial influence the sciences which add comfort to the life of man are fostered! England! that hath given birth to a Milton, a Butler, and an Otway; and left them after the full powers of their intellect were displayed for the benefit and delight of mankind, to pine in obscurity and indigence! Thy wealthy sons suffered this virtuous being to struggle with sickness and want, and left his mind at leisure to prey on its own

sorrows, that under due encouragement might still have administered to intellectual enjoyment;—left this man to be supported and consoled by a few artists and private friends, whose minds were congenial with his own! At this time the Artists' Fund was not established, the want of which has so justly been deplored. Had this fund existed, he might have been saved. The generous donations, that even in its infancy have been bestowed on this Institution, fully proves that there is no want of a grateful benevolence in this country, to those who have added to the stock of rational and innocent amusement; but the evil, perhaps, above all others to be lamented amongst us, attendant on Engraving, arises from the affluent purchaser of prints and the engraver not meeting together. The publisher forms an impassable barrier between the artist and his works; and whatever admiration may be excited by their excellence, their author is no more thought of, than the miner who is delving fifty fathoms below the surface of the earth. These things are certainly managed better in Paris, where it is customary for the connoisseur, and the man of fashion, to visit the study of the engraver, which, while it attaches a respectability to the profession, cannot fail of urging the artist to a display of his utmost powers, and to an indefatigable exertion in pursuit of that fair fame which such patronage seldom fails of producing.

J. Ho[illegible]

THE FIRST LECTURE.

A DESIRE to partake of the honour of promoting the views of this Institution in the promulgation of the principles of taste and science, united with the pleasure of addressing an intelligent and respectable audience on the presumed merits of a reputable branch of Art, are the principal motives that have brought me before you this evening, in the character of a public Lecturer.

Some circumstances connected with the subject I have made choice of, call for an apology: it affords no experiments whereby to relieve the attention of the hearer, fatigued with the monotony of a long-continued harangue; it will therefore be prudent to study brevity, and, if possible, to confine this discourse within the limits of an hour at farthest.

Not having the good fortune to possess a collection of prints, I feel myself at a loss how to illustrate many particulars of the different methods practised by the various masters who have excelled in the art of Engraving. I must there-

fore crave the favour of a patient hearing, with due allowance for the inconvenience of these disadvantages.

Painting, Statuary, and Engraving comprise the whole of imitative Art. Painting is the most beautiful; Statuary, the most durable; and Engraving, the most useful of the three.

The Painter gives sensible existence and permanent effect to the fairy-visions of poetic fancy; recalls and represents to the delighted eye the past scenes of historical events; preserves, to cherish fond remembrance, the endeared features of the departed and lamented friend; or gives to our admiring sight all the variety of objects that exist in countries we never expect to visit, and in situations placed beyond our reach: thus realizing the imaginary, recalling the past, and rendering the absent present, by a kind of magick, whereby colours, light and shade, delude the eye, and setting the sight and touch at variance, give apparent projection, substance, and embodied form, to the level surface of the smooth pannel, or the plain superficies of the extended canvass. But, alas! every tint is transient and evanescent; the very light that gives brightness to the colours, preys upon their beauty; by degrees, the lights grow dull and dim, the shadows black and heavy, till darkness and obscurity envelope the undistinguished mass, and the destructive hand of time sweeps every form away. This

has been the fate of the inestimable performances of Zeuxis, Protogenes, and Apelles, whose names and reputation, poor phantoms of their fame, are all that have reached our times; while the contemporary productions of the chisel, the Venus, the Apollo, the group of Laocöon and his sons, and numerous others, the inestimable vestiges of Grecian taste, still remain, to excite in us those ideas of perfection, which but from their example we never could have conceived, to fix the just criterion of excellence, and for ever to hold out to every passing age this proud challenge; "Let him that cometh after, produce my equal;" without ever finding a competitor.

What Zeuxis and Apelles are now, — empty names faintly borne in the feeble breath of tradition; such Raphael and Michael Angelo, Rubens and Rembrandt, Hogarth and Reynolds, would soon become, if not rescued by that Art, to the consideration of the rise of which, its progress and merits, we devote this evening. This it is that extends the latitude and longitude of the painter's (otherwise contracted) fame; distributes the faithful representation of his best works before eyes that never beheld his pictures; bears testimony to the truth of his reputation in countries where his name would otherwise barely have been heard; and hands down to posterity the transcripts of his excellence, though not in the durable materials of bronze and marble, yet,

by the permanency of numbers, whose multitude mock destruction. Whatever Painting can perform, Engraving can repeat and multiply, colouring alone excepted: hence it has been said, that Engraving is to Painting, the same that Printing is to Literature: it would be more correct to say, it is the same to Painting that Translation is to Literature; with this additional advantage, that it enables Painting to derive the same benefit from the rolling-press, that Literature does from the letter-press. The book when printed, is necessarily confined to the eye of those who can peruse its contents; this renders it a local publication, of little interest beyond the limits of the language it is written in, and, in other countries, can only become current through the medium of a translation: but a print is the translation of a picture legible to every eye, and current in every country; distributing the admirable productions of art into the hands of thousands, who but for Engraving must have lived and died in the ignorance of their worth, because unacquainted with their merits.

Art, like Science, is progressive, and arrives at maturity by the slow growth of gradual improvement; neither of them ever attained its full stature at its birth. Men of talents acquire more knowledge from the works of their predecessors, than the short period allotted to human life would, without such assistance, afford an opportunity for the attainment of. To these acquirements,

study and application add experience; and the aspiring candidate for superior fame, commencing his course where his predecessors concluded their career, animated by the example of those who preceded him, and stimulated by the competition of contemporary rivals, presses forward in all the strength and energy of native genius, toward the goal of laudable ambition, or the proud pinnacle of perfection.

The discovery of the rich remains of Antiquity first broke the dawn of that day in Italy, of which Cimabue was the morning star, and Raphael the meridian sun: from that enlightened land, the bright beams of taste diffused their influence far and wide over the surrounding countries of Europe: but this benighted Island, situated in the horizon of that hemisphere, only caught its twilight, from which it would hardly yet have emerged, had not Engraving reflected upon it that light which shone with such lustre from beyond the Alps. The masterly productions that alone could discover what Art was capable of accomplishing, lay beyond the reach of an English artist, without much expence and travel; and for the most part still remain so: for though some few admirable specimens of the Continental schools have reached our shores, yet each picture, purchased at the expence of a fortune, is preserved with proportionate care, and becomes too difficult of access for the student in

art to form his taste on those incomparable models. But Engraving removes the obstacles that impede the progress of national improvement, and places within the reach of a moderate expence, all but the colours of every school; and the painter, without the toil of travel, or the expense of collecting pictures, obtains, through the medium of Marc Antonio, the chaste outline of Raphael in all its exquisite purity; George Ghisi Mantuanus gives him the sweeping contour of Michael Angelo in all its tremendous sublimity; Gerard Audran lays before him the grandeur of N. Poussin, the dignity of Le Seur, and the expression of Le Brun, enhanced rather than diminished by the hand of the intervening artist; Rembrandt, rich though rude, with his own hand presents the bold principles of his unrivalled light and shade; and the forceful and fanciful compositions of Rubens are delivered by Bolswert with all the fire and energy of the original.

Thus it appears that the practitioners of the other branches of the fine arts are indebted to Engraving for the extension and perpetuity of their fame, for the formation and cultivation of their taste, and I must yet add, for the encouragement of their labours. Patronage, in this country, is a word without a signification: while sums are lavished for a single picture by Titian, or by Claude Lorrain, that either of those painters would have esteemed a fortune, performances of

the most genuine merit from the pencil of our own country-men come to the hammer, and are disposed of for a less price than was paid for the frames that accompany them. It is painful for me to remark that Historical Painting in particular, though justly accounted the highest department of art, must necessarily languish for want of support, must droop, decay, and finally become extinct in this country, if deprived of every other source of emolument but what the taste of its opulent inhabitants affords. But that encouragement which our own legitimate artists are denied at home, Engraving, by becoming an article of commerce, has extracted from abroad, where new subjects being continually called for, pictures became necessary for the engraver to work from, and thus that employment was supplied that was withheld from every other quarter. This opens to our view another branch of usefulness in the Chalcographic art. While commerce existed, the acknowledged excellence of English Engraving established its reputation on the Continent upon so broad a basis, that England became the emporium of the print-trade to all the world, and by the exchange of labour and ingenuity for bullion or commodity, contributed in no small degree to the general influx of national wealth.

Would our time allow of it, many more instances might be adduced, illustrative of the usefulness of the art of Engraving; but fearing the

subject is already becoming tedious, I pass over the advantages derived therefrom to our manufactures, &c. I will beg leave briefly to mention one more instance only, as more intimately connected with the views of this Institution: this art, which in her historic and poetic efforts presumes to claim sisterhood with the muses, in her humbler labours disdains not to become the handmaid of the sciences, and in all the branches of philosophy, natural history, botany, anatomy, architecture, and mechanicks, lends her assistance to convey that intelligence, without the aid of which, description would be ineffectual, and language would labour in vain.

Thus far the utility of the art of Engraving has engrossed our attention; its rise and progress claim our next consideration. That it is of very early invention, appears from the most antient languages having a word to express it by: that in the Hebrew, I am informed, is derived from a verb signifying to plough; evidently expressive of that mode of incision still in practice, which is truly ploughing, in miniature, on metal.

The first species of Engraving that appeared in the world, seems to have been that of *Inscriptions;* and was probably coëval with the invention of letters, or even of hieroglyphicks; but as it was principally on stone, executed in a manner totally distinct, and applied to a purpose entirely different from that branch of art we have

met this evening to investigate, I wave the further consideration of it as foreign to the subject before us.

We find by Herodotus, that one of the most antient purposes to which Engraving on metal was applied, was the delineation of maps. That historian says, that Aristagoras appeared before the king of Sparta with a tablet of brass in his hand, on which were inscribed every part of the habitable world, the seas, and the rivers; and to this he pointed, as he spoke of the several countries between the Ionian sea and Susa. This circumstance took place before the battle of Marathon, and was at least five-hundred years before the æra of human Redemption.

The oldest specimen of Engraving on metal that has come directly to my own knowledge, is to be found on an antient Etruscan patera, preserved in the British Museum; which has been engraved as a frontispiece to the first volume of Mr. Strutt's Dictionary of Engravers. Of the exact date of its antiquity I am by no means qualified to judge; but, from the style of art with which it is decorated, I apprehend it was executed more than two thousand years ago. It is embellished with the representation of the combat between Hercules and the queen of the Amazons, embossed on its surface: the ornamental parts of the drapery on both figures are engraved in zigzag lines, and appear to be performed with

an instrument similar in its construction, or at least in its application, to that we now call a *graver*. Hence I am led to infer, that Engraving was first introduced among the modes of ornamental working on metals, for the purpose of representing distinction of colour, independent of substantial form, as in the bordering of garments, and the like. From this inferior province, it is probable, it proceeded by degrees to the delineation of figures; first, in simple outlines; afterwards with slight shadows, on flat plates of copper, or brass, unaccompanied by any relief. Examples of this kind we frequently meet with on antient tombs; from which, impressions forming rude prints, might actually be taken. Devices executed in the same manner, but with more finishing, formed part of the embellishment of gold and silver plate, and thus the goldsmiths of those days became engravers by profession.

But yet this is not exactly that description of art that forms the subject of the present Lecture, though it leads to it; our subject being intended to be confined principally to the art of executing prints, or rather of preparing copper plates for printing; the invention of which, or, more properly speaking, the discovery of printing from plates of metal, is ascribed to Thomaso Finiguera, a goldsmith at Florence, about the middle of the fifteenth century. This ingenious man having finished some ornamental work wherein engraving

was employed, and having filled the strokes with a black substance, to give it conspicuous effect; examining it by candle-light, accidentally dropped on it some wax from the taper he held in his hand, which instantly hardening on the cold metal, and being chipped off, its inferior surface presented the transcript of the engraving it fell on: this caught his attention, and suggested the idea that some method might be found to take the same kind of impression on paper; which idea he afterwards successfully realized. Here then we have the discovery or invention of printing from plates of metal; it was not, as we have seen, the invention of engraving; neither was it, as we shall see, the origin of prints; for the invention of letter-press printing, which preceded this circumstance but a very few years, had been accompanied by wood-cuts, which are a species of prints.

But to return to Finiguera; very few of the works of this first engraver of copper-plate prints are now extant: I never saw but one (presumed to be by him), which I had the office to copy: I am sorry that I have neither the original nor copy to produce; I will however describe it. It was a small upright print of a Philosopher studying from nature, which is represented by the sphere of the universe, supported on the shoulders of Hercules: it is drawn in a good style, though incorrect; and is engraved in close imitation of a drawing with pen and ink. I apprehend Finiguera made first

a drawing in that manner, carefully laying the strokes in such a way as to avoid crossing them, to prevent the ink from blotting; and that this he afterwards copied stroke for stroke with the graver. In this he was followed by Andrea Mantegna, a painter of high and very deserved repute at that time, who seems to have copied his own drawings with the most minute precision, blots and all.

Thus it seems the first intention of this kind of engraving was the multiplication of pen-and-ink drawings; and had any of the other methods of Engraving since discovered preceded engraving in strokes, the latter would in all likelihood have been distinguished by the appellation of *pen-and-ink* engraving: as another mode, of more recent introduction, has been denominated *chalk-engraving*, because some of the first prints executed in that manner were intentional imitations of drawings with chalk. As there were many in the practice of engraving before prints were thought of, several of them (as might be expected) turned their attention to the new discovery, and engraved plates for the purpose of printing: not all as imitations of drawings, but some executed in the manner they had been used to work in, for ornamental purposes. Amongst these, Baldini and Botticelli undertook to embellish an edition of the works of Dante with a head-piece to each canto: they seem to have re-

linquished their design long before its completion; on what account, is, I believe, unknown; but the greatest number of these prints to be found in any one copy is nineteen: they were not printed on the same paper as the book, but are pasted on the leaves; a blank space being left by the printer over every canto for that purpose: they are far from being contemptible performances. This, I have very little doubt, is the first instance of a book receiving the embellishment of copper-plate prints.

It is not in my power to determine the exact year when the first impression from a plate was printed; the early engravers having neglected to affix dates to their works: the oldest dated prints that I have ever seen or heard of, except wood-cuts, is one of the Virgin and Child, by an unknown German master, bearing the date 1461; and as it was natural to suppose some time to have elapsed between the invention of the art in Italy and the practice of it in Germany, we may reasonably conclude the first plate to have been printed a few years anterior to the before-mentioned date.

The practice of annexing dates to prints did not take place so early in Italy; the oldest Italian print whose antiquity can be exactly ascertained, is prefixed to seven prints of the same size, symbols of the seven planets, in an almanack for the year 1465: these prints are all very

badly engraved, and from the frequent slips of the graver, and other indications of an unexperienced hand, seem to betray a first attempt: this however is not often the case with the first engravers of prints, owing to their being accustomed to the use of the graver before: indeed the comparison of their first labours for the press, with the works of their successors at the commencement of the ensuing century, evinces but little improvement amongst the Italian engravers, in mechanical execution; owing, I apprehend, to the artists of that country being entirely intent on the higher considerations of form and character; in which essential particulars they excelled at the period I have just mentioned, in the highest degree ever attained in any country; — an assertion which the works of Marc Antonio, I trust, will fully justify.

This great artist, like many of his predecessors, was a goldsmith; which profession he quitted for that of an engraver. His first efforts were copies from the works of Albert Durer, who flourished at the same time in Germany; these he is said to have imitated with such exactness that the copies could not be distinguished from the originals: which proved so injurious to the interests of Albert Durer, that he found it necessary to take a journey into Italy, to petition for redress; where all that he could obtain was a decree prohibiting Marc Antonio from affixing to

his copies the signature of Albert Durer in future. About the same time his ingenuity recommended him to the notice of the great Raphael, who ever afterwards gave him employment from his inestimable performances.

This artist's chief merit lay in his outline, which Raphael is reported to have corrected for him on the copper with his own hand. Be this as it may, his outline, as it now stands, is so perfect, that it seems to have left nothing for any other hand to correct. His extremities are marked with the truest precision, and the character of his heads denotes the hand of a master. Had he lived in the present improved state of the art, it can hardly be questioned but he would have been the greatest engraver the world had ever seen; but in the rude state in which he found Engraving, he little thought of the improvement and beauty it was capable of, and therefore neglected all that does not come under the denomination of *form* and *character*, as unworthy of his consideration. He was followed by another fine engraver, nearly of the same description; George Ghisi Mantuanus. In point of outline, Marc Antonio approaches nearest to the antique: and though in light and shadow neither has much to boast, yet I think the latter has the preference for keeping a broader light upon his figures, which Mantuanus, aiming at force upon erroneous principles, by marking the division of muscles or

folds of drapery too powerfully, has often broken and destroyed.

Early as this period was in the age of Engraving, it rose no higher in Italy during the whole of that and the following centuries, but rather continued to decline: for though from the time of Finiguera to the present day, they have been continually improving in mechanical execution; yet till the beginning of the last century, it was by such slow progress that they suffered every other country to get the start of them: while on the other hand, in drawing, wherein at all times lay their principal excellence, they declined as much as they advanced in execution, till at length their outline and finishing met, and were united in something like an equal proportion to each other, in the works of Jacomo Frey. Since that time they have unceasingly improved in all that can contribute to give excellence to their profession, and I think I may safely aver, there never were at any time so many fine engravings of that country as at the present day.

Next in order of time after the Italian, the German school held the pre-eminence.

Beauty of mechanical workmanship in Engraving bears some analogy to colouring in Painting: they both captivate the eye at first sight; and thus make a quicker impression on the mind, though a less lasting one, than beauty of form. This may account for the ascendancy that the

German school acquired in preference to the Italian.

In this branch of Art, we have seen at how early a date it began its progress: the oldest German engravers whose names we are acquainted with, are Martin Schoon and Israel van Mech. They drew (if *drawing* it may be called) in the gothic style of the antient painters of their country; and their drapery has the appearance of being studied from paper: yet even in this infant state of the art, they began to disclose something of that ingenuity in mechanical skill, which this school afterwards so successfully exercised. We have not time to trace the progress of our art step by step through all the successive gradations of its improvement: we will therefore proceed to consider the state of Engraving in Germany at the beginning of the sixteenth century, when Mark Antonio flourished in Italy.

At this time, Albert Durer was the leading artist; a man of great abilities, obscured by the disadvantages of a prejudicial education, the poison of which tainted his taste too deeply ever to be eradicated. He had great command of the graver, and carried finishing much farther than his Italian contemporaries: but his ignorance of the antique left him far behind them in every more important particular.

Engraving continued gradually to improve till the beginning of the seventeenth century; at

which time we find this art in a very flourishing condition, with Henry Goltzius, Herman Muller, Spranger, and others, at its head, who possessed a command of hand which enabled them to use the graver with a degree of freedom that seldom has been equalled, never excelled; the gothic stiffness in their drawing had in a great measure disappeared; and those artists wanted neither knowledge nor ability, but they wanted discretion; they overleaped the limits of reason and moderation, and, in their pursuit of spirit and sublimity, ran into the wildest extremes of extravagance and bombast. But notwithstanding these defects, I think it may be fairly said of the engravers I am now speaking of, and especially of Goltzius, that they brought the art to an height it had never attained before.

Of the last-mentioned artist an anecdote is related, which, if true, affords a striking proof of the extent and versatility of his talents.

Public prejudice beheld with such partial admiration the works of Albert Durer, Lucas van Leyden, and other engravers of this school, that Goltzius found it impossible to establish that reputation for superior excellence to which his merit entitled him. To remedy this evil, he had recourse to stratagem: he secretly engraved several plates in the respective styles of those supposed inimitable artists: and this he performed with such ability, that their admirers were de-

ceived, and admitted these prints to be the chefs-d'-œuvres of the artists whose names they bore: and thus the controversy was decided to the disadvantage of his opponents.

Goltzius suffered them to enjoy their opinion till their error was sufficiently established: he then declared himself the engraver of them all, and produced the copper in confirmation of the truth, accompanied by another plate, engraved in his own usual manner, greatly superior to all the rest. These five prints are frequently to be met with together, and are distinguished by the denomination of "Goltzius' master-piece."

There is a tide in all matters of taste, which having reached its utmost elevation, from that point declines, and ebbs, to flow elsewhere. After the æra we have been speaking of, Engraving rose no higher in Germany; and has since sunk into insignificance. Allured thence by the liberality of the vain, and the munificence of the ostentatious, the genius of Engraving took her flight to a land where whatever can become the vehicle of flattery has ever found a welcome reception.

Whatever may be the foibles of their national character, it is but just to allow the French the commendation of a very spirited people, following their pursuits with indefatigable ardour, and carrying to great lengths whatever they undertake. Engraving is one amongst many examples of this nature, and hence it attained in France a degree of

excellence far surpassing the expectations of its most zealous encouragers. The hard, dry, mechanical manner of the former schools gave way here to softness and richness; the most exquisite execution was diversified with every possible variety; and drawing, character, and expression, combined with the utmost boldness and rigour, or with unparalleled delicacy and neatness, for a long time set all competition at defiance.

Mason and Drevet carried *finishing* to the highest point it ever reached. Nantueil and Edelinck displayed that sentiment in their portraits, which in the features speaks the disposition of the heart. Poilly, Bloemart, and the Audrans, gave History all its interest and importance; but especially Gerard Audran, who despising the frivolity of applying immoderate neatness and elaborate finishing to works of grandeur and sublimity, and led by his own bold feelings, shook off those shackles, and, with a spirit superior to such incumbrances, produced those master-pieces of art, where drawing and character, expression and sentiment, energy and animation, conspire to gratify fully the man of taste, and to astonish and delight every beholder.

During the whole of the seventeenth and part of the eighteenth century, the engravers of France held undisputed superiority over all the rest of Europe; but in later times, since British

talent has discovered its powers. French genius seems to have lost its vigour, and to have fallen into decay; but not suddenly: it is not long since Ballechou and Wille stood champions for its reputation; and it still retains engravers whose talents are not to be despised.

Thus led by the genius of Engraving, we have followed her footsteps through many a distant land: now, conducted by her guidance, we find firm footing on our native soil.

The use of the graver found an early introduction into this Island, where it was chiefly employed in the illustration and embellishment of literature; though, to say the truth, such was the state of the arts here at that time, that books so adorned were oftener disgraced than ornamented; and it were time lost to dwell on the merits, or rather demerits, of the early English Engravers.

Historical engraving as yet was not. Portrait formed the principal part of the engraver's employ; and truly they whose likenesses were thus published and preserved, may well be absolved from the imputation of vanity, if they were satisfied with such resemblances.

But little merit worth our notice, arose before the seventeenth century: towards the middle of which, Hollar, Faithorne, Marshall, and some others, put Engraving upon a more respectable footing. I must not pass the name of Hollar

without doing him the justice to remark, that the force and freedom of his etchings reflect on him the highest credit as an Artist, and give proof of abilities that would have been an ornament to any country in any age: his vast powers were often wasted on subjects very unworthy of them; and he executed works of history, portrait, landscape, beasts, birds, buildings, and ornaments, with equal attention; marking all with the hand of a master; especially his animals, in Barlow's Æsop, which will ever retain the estimation of every man of taste: but the national troubles of those times soon disturbed the repose of the arts, and frightened them quite away. After this, a tasteless court influenced a tasteless people; genius was discouraged, and the tide of art sunk to a lower ebb than ever. Again the works of our authors were ushered in effigy, fit only to be burnt; and were adorned with *cuts*, as the phrase then was, far too contemptible for criticism.

In this account of the low state of Engraving, it is necessary I should notice that Mezzotinto (a species of engraving which we shall explain in a subsequent Lecture,) in the hands of Smith, Faber, and others, was assuming a rank of considerable respectability; but such was the depressed condition of the other branches of the art, that, early in the last century, a work being projected, consisting of fine portraits of all the great men whose talents had been an honour to this Nation, no

Englishman could be found capable of engraving the plates; and it became necessary to send them for that purpose into Holland, where they were executed by Houbraken in a style that will do honour to his name so long as a single impression remains to bear testimony to his talents. But I am happy to add, that before the end of the same century the Dutch sent pupils into this country to learn the same art from the English, with the view of retrieving it, for the sake of its commercial advantages. From the period I was speaking of we may date the gradual rise of English Engraving.

Vertue engraved the portraits of the English monarchs, of the same size, and apparently with a view to imitate Houbraken; and though below the merits of that eminent artist, yet I think for this and other works we may fairly consider him as entitled to much praise. The numerous works of Vertue certainly claim a rank above mediocrity: they appeared to such advantage in the eyes of his contemporaries as to entitle him to a monument in Westminster Abbey. Dorigny engraved the Cartoons, taking Gerard Audran for his model; and, though far behind him in drawing, and in giving the style of the master, he doubtless possessed considerable merit, which was rewarded with the rank of knighthood; it being the first instance of an engraver receiving that distinction at the English Court.

These were succeeded by Vandergucht, Ravenet, Baron, and that glory of his country, the inimitable Hogarth, whose incomparable compositions of characteristic humour, both on the canvass and the copper, place him at the head of that department of the arts without a rival.

At the period of British art I am now speaking of, it may not be amiss to advert for a few minutes to the state of British encouragement at the same time. Two examples of the mode of payment then resorted to, will throw more light on this subject than we should obtain from the longest dissertation.

When the last-mentioned artist first began to exercise those unparalleled powers that have so justly rendered him the object of universal admiration and applause, his labours were rewarded by the liberality of an employer who gave him for each plate double the price of the copper he worked on; by which Hogarth received as much for his work as the copper-smith did for his, notwithstanding he found copper; which I understand Hogarth took care should be of an abundant thickness. To the same Mecænas the late Mr. Major, when a young man, applied with two beautiful little landscapes he had engraved, with the view to bring his name before the publick, and procure his introduction on the theatre of art. Happy I am to say, he received every encouragement words could afford; the Patron of Merit

admired and acknowledged their beauty; thought him a very promising young artist; and, willing liberally to contribute to the advancement of a rising genius, handsomely offered him in exchange for his engraved plates, two plain ones of the same size, on which by continuing to practise he might improve himself still further.

A little before the middle of the century we are treating of, books began to receive the embellishment of genuine Art from the hands of the ingenious Mr. C. Grignion. Many of the numerous works of this excellent Artist possess great merit; particularly his prints for Milton's Paradise Lost, and those for the quarto edition of Don Quixote: and it is but allowing a just claim, to acknowledge him the father of all that splendid decoration that has of late distinguished the literary productions of this country.

Soon after the middle of this century, a memorable revolution took place in the state of the English arts, and in none more conspicuously than in Engraving. British genius now began suddenly to display as decided an ascendancy in art, as ever British valour had assumed in arms.

Three of the most distinguished artists, who by their admirable talents contributed to give that superiority to English prints, which they have ever since retained the undisturbed possession of, deserve our particular attention.

This distinction they first received from the works of Sir Robert Strange; who, had his drawing been equal to his engraving, would have left no room for further improvement in the art; his eye for colour, the richness of his flesh both in tone and texture, the firmness and freedom of his graver, produced all the effect which the highest finishing could attain; and one cannot behold his Venus, and his Danaë, after Titian, with many other of his works, without lamenting that deficiency of drawing, which alone stands between him and perfection.

Woollet's transcendant abilities first discovered themselves in his landscapes, in which line he far surpassed all that the world has ever seen, or, it is likely, ever will see. His modesty equalling his merit, at first led him to conceive himself inadequate to the task of engraving figures, even when they occurred in his own landscapes; and he actually employed men of inferior abilities to engrave them for him: but not finding them executed to his satisfaction, he afterwards ventured to engrave them himself: the favourable reception these attempts met with, induced him to proceed yet further, and he undertook an historical plate. I have no need to expatiate on his success in this undertaking; it is sufficient to say that he excited the admiration of all Europe by the production of that unequalled performance, the Death of General Wolfe:—I said unequalled

performance; I recall the word; it has been equalled; it has been surpassed, but only by the hand of the same artist, in that truly inimitable production, the Battle of La Hogue. In landscape he undoubtedly stands first, without an exception: in history it is not perhaps too much to say, there never lived a man who could have engraved the same plates with equal excellence. Portrait I believe he never attempted but once; but that once was sufficient to shew that he could, if he had pleased, as easily have stood at the head of that department as of any other; and, for variety of surface, boldness of contrast, force of effect, accuracy of execution, and richness of texture, surely I may be allowed to say, Woollet never had an equal. ×

By what epithet shall I do justice to the genius, taste, and fancy, of that mighty master of grace, elegance, and beauty, Mr. Bartolozzi, whose high example during his long residence in this country contributed above all things to the improvement of British Engraving, and whose best works being executed amongst us, and therefore considered as English prints, in no small degree enhanced the reputation of British art through all the rest of Europe? Beauty, surpassing all that has ever been seen before, characterized all his labours; its excess is almost their only defect; the same sweetness that smiles in his countenances, is extended in grace and elegance through every limb, perhaps sometimes

with rather too little discrimination; from whatever painter he engraves, beauty is still the characteristick of the print; however worthless the picture, every deficiency is supplied by the taste of the engraver; but hence it has sometimes happened that in works from the greater painters, where a severity of countenance, and a more masculine style of drawing has been deemed necessary to give dignity to the character, the print has been rather lovely than sublime; but these are motes in the beams of the sun, and leave a large proportion of his incomparable performances beyond all controversy the finest examples of elegance, taste, and beauty, the world has ever beheld.

The time I have already devoted to the contemplation of individual character, admonishes me of the necessity of brevity in the remainder of my subject, and compels me to content myself with the bare mention of the names of Vivares, Hall, and Ryland; each of whom I should otherwise have been glad to have noticed with the consideration of a separate attention.

Thus we have seen that Engraving, first discovered in Italy, preserved its superiority there for about half a century: thence it removed to Germany, where it held the pre-eminence during the sixteenth century: declining there, it rose in France, where it flourished in full strength till the middle of the seventeenth century; when it rose in England, I hope to set no more. It now remains for me to

take a view of the present state of the Art, before I dismiss the subject, and take my leave for this evening; reserving the discussion of the principles and practice of Engraving till the next time that I shall have the honour of addressing you from this place. But before I draw to a conclusion, I will beg leave to take a cursory review of the different schools of which we have been treating, for the purpose of discovering what each has separately contributed toward that accumulated state of excellence at which the art has now arrived.

The opportunity of a ready reference to the Antique, that inexhaustible fountain whence alone the moderns draw true taste, has been productive of this effect, that beauty of form, or fine drawing, has always been the distinguishing characteristick of the Italian artists in every department of their profession; and as it is the first and most essential requisite in all works of art, it necessarily stamps a superior value on whatever is found to possess it in a high degree of perfection: to this is owing the distinguished esteem placed in the productions of the early engravers of the Italian school: though they excelled in nothing else, the extreme beauty of their drawing being accepted as a sufficient compensation for every defect. The deficiency of their mechanism has been already spoken of: so neglectful were they of the principles of light and shadow, that even Agostino Carracci, admirably as he painted, and exqui-

sitely as he drew, seems in his engraving never to have dreamt that harmony and effect were attainable in a print, and even their inimitable outline, perfect as it was in its form, was constantly described by a firm steady line encompassing every object with unvaried strength, rendering thereby all their works hard and dry in the utmost degree.

The merit of the German school stands in direct opposition to that of the Italian. While the latter accomplished all that the highest perfection of drawing can achieve, (though as yet they had hardly advanced far enough in finishing to give roundness to a limb or evenness to a back-ground,) their German antagonists carried their flowing lines over the varied surface of the muscular figures, waving in conformity to the swell or recess of the anatomical markings, or meandering through a maze of folded drapery obedient to the intricate perplexity of complicated perspective; or swept the bold stroke round the swelling limb with mingled freedom, force, and feeling: but all their powers of execution were not sufficient to compensate the deficiency of their drawing, though they made a vast and rapid improvement in this respect from their gothic manner in the early stages of the art; yet not having the antique to guide them, they still continued gross mannerists, ever liable to extremes, mistaking stiffness for simplicity, bombast for sublimity, and extravagance for spirit.

Though I give this as a general character of the German school, it admits of exceptions in their favour; and some of Goltzius's best prints, particularly his antique statues, are drawn in so good a style, that one cannot help wondering how his eye could have endured the extravagant bombast of many of his other works. Let any one compare the print of the Farnesian Hercules, with his own figure of the same hero prefixed to his Twelve Labours, and I hope he will be convinced of the propriety of this remark.

The German as well as the Italian school was subject, though in a less degree, to the further defects of a hard, dry outline, and very imperfect principles of light and shadow.

Before we pass on to France, permit me for a few minutes to direct your attention to the character of Engraving in two other countries, which we passed over unnoticed in our history of the Art, to avoid the interruption it would then have given to the account of its regular progress: the schools I now speak of are the Dutch and Flemish. The masters of the former of these have seldom been occupied in sublime and classical subjects, and still less often have they treated them classically; and when they have attempted so to do, they have for the most part failed; but in the domestic scenes of low life, their works are replete with national character, and marked with all the spirit of their painters. I believe I may reckon this school

amongst the first who distinguished themselves in landscape: and for portrait, in the person of Houbraken, they possessed an artist who, except in the French school, never was excelled: with him seems to have died the genius of Engraving in Holland.

The Flemish school possessed a higher rank of merit in the works of L. Vosterman, Pontius, Bolswert, and others who in all the superior departments of the art exhibited the same style, the same principles, and I had almost said the same powers, as Rubens and his disciples displayed on the canvass. This is most conspicuously the case with Bolswert, who may truly be said to have given us all but the colouring of Rubens's pictures; and in the execution of the noble compositions of that great master, he seems as if the same spirit that inspired the painter, had animated the engraver.

We come now to treat of the French school; which, taken altogether, is generally considered as the completest the world has yet seen. The French engravers were the first who united good drawing with skilful execution. They divested Engraving of its hard, dry outline; and substituted the soft and varied termination that gives beauty to painting, and is founded in nature: to this they added variety of workmanship corresponding to the various textures and surfaces of the different objects they had to represent: and these

improvements they united to an extent of finishing, that justly rendered their performances the admiration of all the world.

In the department of History, they may justly be considered as holding a rank of very superior distinction, especially in the productions of Gerard Audran: but Portrait seems to have been their highest point of excellence, wherein they achieved wonders that no nation can ever hope to surpass; and almost every excellence Engraving is capable of, seems to have been attained in this school, except a perfect system of light and shadow.

The peculiarities of every nation are less evident to natives than to foreigners: for, to national prejudice every man is more or less liable, though himself altogether unconscious of it: this renders it extremely difficult for the native of any country to form a right judgment of its taste, or justly to appreciate its attainment in the arts. Sensible of this, I enter on the character of the English school with a degree of diffidence that would deter me from treating of it, were it not that I apprehend the discourse would be deemed insufficient without it; but seeing no way to avoid it, I proceed.

In drawing, if *we* equal what the French have done, we shall still find the Italian school far before us in that respect; and a more general extent of ability in this particular, may, I conceive, yet be

looked forward to, as a further improvement in the state of the art. In execution, I think our country quite equals at least (if not excels) all that it has yet ever had to contend with; and if in point of finishing, the French have surpassed us (as in their portraits, I confess, I think they have), it has originated rather in the liberality of the encouragers of art in that country, than in any deficiency of skill, attention, or perseverance, on the part of our countrymen; and for the true system of chiaroscuro, for harmony of colour, and brilliancy of effect, it were too little to say the English Engravers excel all that have gone before them; rather be it said, that they alone have introduced it, practised it with success, and brought it to perfection. In all other countries, and before the present age in this, Engraving was considered as only capable of producing the effect of light and shade, upon solid objects; or, in other words, of representing all objects as they would appear if they were deprived of their natural difference of colour, and only distinguished by the light and shadow which falls upon them; but modern English Engraving has ventured to represent not only the light and shadow, but the natural difference of colour, by which each object is distinguished; an improvement that seems to leave nothing further to expect. But a more extensive discussion of this subject I reserve for a future Lecture.

From all these acquirements combined, I presume I may say that the English Engravers have produced, and still continue to produce, historical prints, which, take them for all and all, form more complete works of art, than any other age or country ever had to boast of;—Portraits, that France alone, in her brightest day, has been able to equal;—Landscapes, that leave no question of their superlative superiority to every thing of the kind ever seen;—Natural History, that, by the beauty of its execution, assumes an importance it never knew before;—and all the inferior departments of the art are performed with taste and skill never thought of in other countries, or in other times. The sum of all which, is this; however we may hitherto have fallen short of perfection,—have had some few difficulties to surmount, and some points of competition to encounter; yet on the whole, whether we search the portfolios and cabinets of the curious, survey the decorated walls of the splendid mansion, or inspect the embellished libraries of the literati, all the world must be convinced that Engraving has acquired in this country an elevation and distinction unparalleled in the annals of art.

Such is the state of Engraving at the present day; what further advances it may be capable of, is difficult to discover: no doubt, every age supposed they had approached perfection as nearly as the nature of the Art would allow: and an

original genius alone can declare what itself is able to produce.—The only improvement I can conceive possible, would be the union and combination of the various merits of those who seem each to have reached perfection in their own particular department: as, if some one should be found to unite the tone and texture of Strange, with the perfect outline of Marc Antonio; the clearness of Wille, with the richness of Woollet; the spirit and character of Gerard Audran, and his conformity to the painter, with the taste and beauty of Bartolozzi; and, combining the whole, complete the work with the finishing of Drevet.

I spoke of an original genius: there are those who would reply, What has Engraving to do with originality of genius? Correctness of copying, and accuracy of execution, require nothing more than careful attention to all those minutiæ that particularize the constituent principles of ingenuity only: genius is the reverse of this; for it is not a display of neatness of hand, but of energy of mind.

It is the province of the Engraver to copy the painter as the painter himself copies nature, not in the line or letter only, but in the spirit and power of the original; not merely to transcribe, but to translate a work of genius from one branch of art to another; to be that to Raphael or Rubens, that Pope and Dryden have been to Homer and Virgil; teaching them a language they never knew, and

transferring not only the inventions of their imagination, but the taste and fancy, sentiment and sublimity, with which they are expressed: and as the translator of Homer should write the poem which Homer would have written, had he been an Englishman; so should the engraver produce the print the painter would have engraved, had he been of that profession. If then Dryden and Pope, considered as translators, be admitted to have been men of genius; who shall deny the same claim to Marc Antonio, Gerard Audran, Cornelius Vischer, Bolswert, Strange, Woollet, Bartolozzi, and a long list of others, closed by an illustrious assemblage of living geniuses clustering like stars in a constellation, differing rather in magnitude than lustre, with a catalogue of whose names I could be proud to conclude this Lecture, but that I feel myself incompetent to the task of arranging the order of their precedency: but such is their merit, that I should esteem that man unworthy of his profession, who would hesitate to avow himself proud of the honour of enrolling his name in any part of the list of the English Engravers at the commencement of the nineteenth century.

THE SECOND LECTURE.

PRINCIPLES of art are to genius what grammar is to language; a right system of classification. Most of the general principles of Engraving are deduced from the principles of art in general; for without these, a man may be an Engraver, but he will never be an Artist. This consideration I leave to plead my excuse, if, in the pursuit of my subject, I sometimes seem to discourse of studies more appropriate to Painting than to Engraving.

I observed in a former Lecture, that whatever the Painter can perform, the Engraver can repeat; but to execute this with success, he will require the aid of the same principles: there is therefore no branch of study necessary for the Painter, that is not equally so for the Engraver, except colouring. This observation extends not to Invention; for that depending neither on principle nor practice, can neither be acquired by education nor experience. Logick may teach

us to arrange our ideas; Rhetorick, to express them; and the principles of Art, to represent them: but neither of these can supply their deficiency, or furnish them to an empty understanding: the notions must be intuitive, and the capacity innate, or the Philosopher, the Poet, and the Painter, will seek them in vain. But it may be asked, What more can be required of the Engraver than accurately to copy the original? What more can be required, in the recital of a poetical passage, than a due attention to articulation, accent, emphasis, and gesture, and a correct memory retentive of the whole? And yet one man shall freeze the blood and harrow up the soul with the same lines, that from another shall tire the ear and fatigue the attention: the same melody, that from the fingers of one performer shall pierce the melting soul, and awaken all the feelings of ecstasy, till every fibre in our frame vibrates in responsive unison to the vocal tube or sounding string, shall from another hand exhaust our patience, and weary us with its hideous din: and yet both the speakers uttered the same words, and the same sense was understood; both the performers played the same notes on the same instrument, to the same time, and the same tune was produced. The difference lies here; the first speaker *felt* the sentiment of the poet, and by the expression of what he felt, excited corresponding sentiments in the mind of his auditor:

the other merely *understood* the writer, and in his turn was merely understood. The first performer caught the *rapture* that influenced the composer when he wrote the melody; this feeling inspired his hand with that expression that communicated to the mind of the hearer the sympathy of delight: the second *read* the notes, his fingers only were employed, and the ear alone received the impression; but the soul both of him that played and of him who listened, remained unaffected: for mind alone can converse with mind: and sound or colour, language or representation, poetry or painting, are only vehicles of intelligence between corresponding spirits. A man may copy with the most elaborate servility, yet lose all the taste of the original; his drawing seems *correctly* accurate, yet it has contracted stiffness, and he cannot tell what makes the difference: his heads are not unlike, but they have lost the sentiment and expression of the picture, he knows not how: the limbs are round, but not fleshy; the draperies are correct, but not loose and flowing: what has been the cause? This engraver was ignorant of the principles that should guide the hand of the artist, and therefore could not discover those of the painter he was engraving after; and again, he had no powers of his own, and depended solely on servile imitation: he had no feelings, and could not catch those of another: he has therefore transcribed the letter, but not the spirit of the

original; and has substituted mere accuracy in the room of taste and genius. That engraver alone can expect to produce the same admiration by his prints as attends the works of the painter he engraves from, who knows enough of the genuine principles of art to enable him to discover those employed by each particular master he works from; and further, who is capable of adopting the taste and sentiment of another with sufficient force to make the same impression and produce the same effect as the original. Without the first of these requisites, he will grope in the dark incapable of detecting his own errors; without the second, his imitation, however servile, will be tasteless and insipid, lifeless and unfeeling; and neglect, if not contempt, will repay all his labours. Not that I mean to depreciate fidelity of imitation, but rather to enforce it: the mirror gives not a more faithful representation of the object before it, than the engraver should exhibit of the picture he is copying: for, if not worthy to be imitated, it is not worthy to be engraved: but he who aims at imitating the form and colour only, repeats but the inferior half of the performance; the taste and spirit, the expression and sentiment, will be found to have evaporated, and nothing will remain but the dry husk alone, despoiled of its beauty, and deprived of its sweetness.

Each painter has his distinguishing and characteristic peculiarity, which is usually denominated

manner. How far this is a worthy object of the engraver's imitation, seems in this place to be no unseasonable enquiry. We are mostly distinguished from each other by our defects; for perfection is a point where all meet; and the more remote from this point, the more widely are we distinct. From this mode of reasoning, it appears that manner is a defect, and such I think it has always been understood: is it then worthy of our imitation? If the engraver could substitute perfection in its room, I should acknowledge the exchange a good one: but, alas! he is the child of imperfection also; and the only exchange within his power is the substitution of one manner for another; his own for that of the painter, which can never be attended with any advantage, unless he engraves from pictures unworthy to be placed before him as originals. But in imitating the manner of the painter, it behoves the engraver carefully to avoid exaggeration; the portrait-painter may increase the likeness by exaggerating the blemishes of the countenance he copies, but thereby he produces—not character but caricature; and he is the true master of portrait, who, like Titian, Vandyke, and Reynolds, preserves all that is truly characteristic, without bringing the defects into notice. As the first consideration in a portrait is likeness; so I conceive the leading merit in an engraving to be the preservation of the stile and character of the master after whom it is

engraved; and that on the first sight of a print, the spectator should discover the painter, if he is at all acquainted with his works, before he thinks of the engraver: in fact, that all the engraver's stile, manner, and peculiarity, should be entirely absorbed in that of the painter; yet that while he preserves all that is characteristic and original, he should diminish, and, as far as he is able, extenuate all that is vicious and defective in the performance placed before him: and this ought he so to perform, that the painter may see himself faithfully represented, and be satisfied; and all who admire his works, acknowledge the print to be in his best manner, yet evidently in his, and no other.

Painting, as well as Engraving, has its mechanism; and very often that mechanism has its beauty. To pencil well, every painter considers as an accomplishment in his art; and the works of many are highly prized on that account in particular. Wherever then the pencilling of a picture has any pretensions to excellence, I presume it is well worthy of imitation, if the mode of engraving be capable of retaining it; nor do I see how the true stile of the master can be completely represented without it; the method of handling characterizing the works of different masters as distinctly, as the peculiarities attendant on writing do the several hands of individuals.

Of all the branches of imitative art, Engraving is that in which delicate finishing and decided determination are most indispensably requisite, especially wherever superior excellence is the end aimed at: for no other branch of art is so constantly the subject of minute investigation. Painting is for the most part calculated for a remote view; but Engraving must always be prepared to stand the test of close inspection, and must therefore present its various objects finished with delicacy, and determined with precision. Many a picture that at a distance seems to represent nature in forms well defined, and in decided characters, on a nearer approach falls into a mass of unintelligible confusion; such works present difficult subjects for the engraver to execute, especially if he depends alone on accuracy of imitation; for that will prove insufficient: by placing the picture at its proper distance, he may imitate its intended effect: but all that a nearer examination might be expected to discover, he must supply, still retaining the stile of the master, still preserving the same general appearance, and, without losing the original ideas of the painter, carry them on to higher finishing, and give a determined signification to every vague hint and imperfect imitation.

Proceed we now to the consideration of those principles that constitute the scientific part of the chalcographic art.

In a former Lecture, we traced Engraving through all its successive improvements, from its earliest date to the present time; we then compared the separate pretensions of the different schools; and the result was, that beauty of form, though originally from the antique, in regard to engraving, appeared to be of Italian extraction; command of the graver, of German descent; variety of texture, delicacy of termination, and all the requisites for finishing, of French derivation; and the true system of chiaroscuro, of British birth and education. Of these elements, modern Engraving is compounded; they must also form the materials of this and some subsequent Lectures. For the sake of convenience, I shall reduce them to the following arrangement: Form; Colour; and Mechanism. These I consider as the first principles of all Engraving; and proceed to discourse of them each separately, in the order I have named them.

Form justly claims our first consideration; it stands first both in order and importance. To describe the outline on the copper is the engraver's first care; and from the commencement to the completion of every undertaking, its beauty and correctness are his most important concern.

Duly to estimate the high importance of a just conception and correct delineation of form, we must consider that it constitutes the prime essence of all that is grand or graceful, sublime or beauti-

ful, simple or magnificent, in nature or in art. As a subject of study, it holds the highest consequence in every department of art, but in none more eminently than in Engraving; where, for reasons already explained, determination and correctness are so indispensably required; but its difficulty is equal to its importance, requiring a keen eye to observe and discover, a refined taste and sound judgment to discriminate, and a correct and skilful hand to execute:—qualifications attainable but by few, nor ever without early education, habitual practice, and long experience.

Form presents itself to the study of the artist under the different considerations of character and beauty: we will treat of them separately.

Character is that peculiarity in the general appearance of an object, whereby, without any particular attention to its configuration, it is known and distinguished from all others, and by which it is recognized as soon as seen.

The works of Creation, considered as objects of sight, are arranged in general classes; as clouds, rocks, trees, &c. Every object that meets the sight in nature, may be considered as an individual member of a general class; as a rock, a cloud, or a tree. No two objects, though of the same class, are ever found to coincide in their particular forms; but for the most part, especially in inanimate nature, are widely different. But though the particular form of each individual differs

widely, yet a principle of formation prevails throughout every class, producing a general appearance in which they all agree. By this prevailing principle we discover the species of any object at first sight, though its exact form appear irregular and widely varied from any one we have ever seen before: for example, by this distinguishing quality we easily recognize a tree, though situated at such a distance that all its component parts are lost to the sight, which contemplates nothing but its general appearance; and even as to its particular figure, it differs materially from that of all others; the principle of its form is all we find ourselves acquainted with, and thereby we know and denominate it. And thus in art, although the representation of a tree be composed of parts very dissimilar to the leaves and other minutiæ of such an object, and though its general form represents no particular tree in existence; yet the general principle being attended to and preserved, it imparts the idea of a tree to all who behold it, and is in no danger of being mistaken for the representation of any other object in creation.

This distinguishing principle, and which arranges its various objects in their respective classes, is what I mean by characteristic form. It is that which constitutes the essence of distinction, whence the different appearances of nature are derived.

Characteristic form is divisible into general, specific, and particular.

General characteristic form is that by which each department of natural appearances is known and distinguished: this I will endeavour to illustrate by two or three familiar examples. Though the clouds that float in the atmosphere exhibit a variety of forms little short of infinitude; probably no two clouds, from the creation to the present period, have ever assumed exactly the same appearance; yet all have agreed in that general characteristic form by which clouds are distinguished from all other objects. The rugged rock, with all its rudeness, never deviates from that peculiarity of form inseparable from its nature, and incommunicable to all besides. The billows that diversify the surface of the ocean, are as infinite in variety as they are innumerable for multitude; though no one ever continued in the same shape a single moment, but is for ever changing its figure for a new one; yet, in all that inconceivable variation, it never bore the form characteristic of agitated fluidity, or appeared under that of any other of the objects in nature. Thus far characteristic form.

The peculiar circumstances concerned in the formation of different divisions of each class of objects, give rise to specific characteristic form: thus the clouds that produce thunder, rain, or snow, have their separate characters, and are easily distinguished by persons accustomed to observe them: though, in all rocks, a consistency of craggy character always prevails;—yet those of slate, of

free-stone, or of granite, have each its specific distinction; the general character still remaining undestroyed and undisturbed.

Having endeavoured to explain what I mean by characteristic form, I will now proceed to examine wherein it consists. I conceive it to be seated in the construction of the lines that describe the parts of which an object is composed, and in the mode of combination by which those lines are united. The forms of rocks, for instance, are composed of a peculiar kind of irregular line, approaching to straightness, arranged in almost parallel order, and connected nearly at right-angles. Waves are described by concave and convex lines in alternate succession, and the concavities exceeding the convexities in their dimensions. An attentive examination may thus discover the principle peculiar to every class. In proof that this is the principle of characteristic form, it is observable that when clouds, which are the most capricious and inconstant in their forms of any object I know of, are seen described by lines resembling in principle those I have been speaking of as characterizing rocks, we then denominate them rocky: whenever we meet with concavities alternately interchanged with convexities, we pronounce the form described by such lines to be wavy; meaning thereby, that such forms are constructed on the principle proper to rocks, waves, &c.

If we enquire into the origin of this distinguishing principle, I apprehend we shall find it in the nature of the elements whereof each object is compounded, in the mode of their arrangement and combination, and in the manner of their production: for we infer, that no appearance in creation is drawn by the random stroke of chance, but that each is the product of chemical or mechanical operation, regulated by those laws whereby the Creator governs nature. Wherever the same causes operate, similarity of effect must of necessity ensue, and diversity of cause will as necessarily produce variety of effect: hence arises the general agreement between the members in each class, and the consequent distinction of each species from all others. An extensive knowledge, then, of Nature in all her mutations, and of the laws that govern all her operations, affords considerable advantage to the artist, by enabling him to trace appearances to their efficient cause; and often empowering him to proceed in their representation on principles productive of the same effect. Not only is each species of objects distinguished by characteristic form, but their different qualities and the circumstances attending them are also discernible by the peculiarity of their appearance: thus forms easily susceptible of motion have their characteristic distinction, even in a quiescent state; and the elastic spiral curve of hair, or the easy flow of unconfined drapery, is in its represen-

tation pronounced to be loose or stiff, flowing or cramped, according as we are affected by the sentiment that the characteristic form indicative of flexibility is lost or preserved. Yet further, this principle not only discovers to the eye susceptibility of motion; it enables us to impress the mind with the sentiment of motion itself. This is an instance wherein art looks to nature for principles rather than for examples; and, not resting in its effect on the eye, addresses the mind; producing there a sentiment of resemblance exceeding any existing between the representation and its antetype. Agitated water, drapery blown by the wind, and other objects in motion, cannot, truly speaking, be represented by imitative art: for how can permanent form represent that which is transitory and evanescent? And yet we find that the spectator is not only satisfied, but more delighted with this kind of representation than with almost any other; as if pleased to be indulged with the permanent contemplation of those forms of which nature never allows more than a transient glance. In well-executed art the wave appears with easy sway to sink and swell; the floating streamer, or the fluttering flag, seems to shiver in the wind: now, how is this produced? By characteristic form: for the wave is ever describing that which is passing to instant alteration; the fluttering standards, under all the variety of appearances they assume, are seen in none but what indicate imme-

diate change. Being always accustomed to see these forms accompanied by motion, we associate the ideas with each other till they become inseparable, and the mind conceiving the sentiment that such appearances are incompatible with rest, feels something very like an expectation they will move, nay sometimes almost forgets that they are stationary. But characteristic form can represent motion only in such objects as vary their appearance by change of figure: a ball rolled on the ground, or whirled through the air, cannot in representation be distinguished from one lying at rest, or hanging in suspense.

The intention of this investigation of characteristic form is, to lead the student in art through a right path to the study of nature, by directing his attention to the constituent principle of form in every object of imitation; which, once discovered, practice will enable him to transfer from nature to art by the best means his line of profession furnishes him with, be it the chisel, the pencil, the graver, or the point.

It may also be useful to the admirer of art in the formation of his judgment, by teaching him wherein to make the comparison between art and nature, in order to judge right of their relative resemblance.

Let it not be considered as a departure from my subject, that I discourse of those principles which, though indispensably necessary to Engrav-

ing, are not exclusively so, but are common to all the arts: those peculiar to Engraving only, shall be attended to in due time: in the mean while I hope it will be remembered that the general interest which every department of art has in the study of form, does not in the least diminish its importance to the Engraver; who, if he build on any other foundation, can hope to erect but a weak superstructure.

We come now to treat of character as exhibited in animated nature. In this department of creation, it acquires additional interest from the stamp of sensibility: this is the first impression we receive from the observation of animal character, or, as it is vulgarly expressed, from the look of the creature: and it is from this impression that we annex to almost every class of animals a sentimental attribute; as pride to the horse, dulness to the ass, churlishness to the hog, innocence to the lamb: in this kind of distinction we seem to be less guided by the experience we have of the several dispositions of those animals, than by the impression made by their exterior appearance. The lamb is not in reality more inoffensive than the calf, nor more sagacious; yet we ascribe innocence to the former, and only stupidity to the latter. If we enquire in what this distinguishing property of animal character or look originates, I apprehend it will be found, in this as well as in the inanimate creation, that it consists in the peculiar

construction of line that prevails throughout in the formation of each separate class of animals, rather than in the form itself. Thus the horse and the ass are nearly allied in form, yet widely distinct in character. On the other hand, the various species of dogs differ greatly in their form; yet the canine character still prevails in all, though under different modifications.

We will now pass on to consider the characteristic effects of animal motion. Variation of form in dead matter, can only be effected by the impulse of foreign agents; but in animal life it springs from an internal principle, and is then called action: motion is always characterized by the nature of the matter moved and of the moving cause taken together. In animal action, the moving cause is the same principle as imprints the sentimental impression on the character; therefore this impression is never so strongly stamped, as when the animal is in action: and the consequence is, that animals are more characterized by their actions than by their forms. How these varying appearances can be intelligibly represented by appearances that never vary, I have already endeavoured to explain, when speaking of inanimate motion; and need only observe here, that the gesture of an animal in a state of action differs characteristically from one in a state of inactivity; and thereby action becomes capable of representation. But to catch

the feeling for this transient characteristick, and to transfer it to the canvass, or retain it on the copper, is an effort of sterling genius: mere attitude will not suffice the painter; an animal placed in an attitude, has none of the characteristicks of action: close copying alone, is insufficient for the engraver to retain the spirit and expression of the action: it must be felt as well as seen; or there will be an entire absence of all animation.

In the apparently casual and accidental forms of nature, character marks none strongly but general distinctions. In organized nature, specific character imprints a stronger stamp; in the animated divisions of creation, it begins weakly to identify individuals: but in the human race, individual distinction is marked with a decision that precludes the possibility of confusion; and is extended through a boundless variety, inconceivable by the most comprehensive capacity.

Yet, infinite as this variety is, it can subsist in unison with a degree of similarity sufficient to characterize by their corresponding likeness the inhabitants of the largest continents. Wide is the dominion of character over all the kingdoms of nature, combining and dividing, classing and distinguishing, all the subjects of visible existence: but "in the human face divine" she fixes her abode, establishes her throne, and manifests her supreme presence. So essential is cha-

racter to the countenance in the consideration of an artist, that the faces in a picture or a print are, in the language of art, emphatically denominated character, as if implying that in this sense only they are worthy to be regarded.

Character is the essence of all that is intelligent and interesting in the physiognomy; its variety constitutes distinction, its repetition likeness; it connects and assimilates in families, tribes, and nations, the inhabitants of the globe, the individual distinction remaining uninjured by the specific mark of family-likeness, the specific peculiarity of family-resemblance continuing unimpaired by the general stamp of national character; so tenaciously does it retain its identifying power, that it is ever distinguishable amidst all the variety of form which the features undergo in the expression of succeeding or conflicting passions.

Shall we enquire wherein this strange interesting quality resides? I apprehend, wholly in form. A drawing in red chalk, bistre, or Indian ink; a bust in marble, bronze, or plaster; or an engraving printed in any one colour; are all equally capable of preserving likeness as powerfully without the assistance of the natural colours, as with them.

Now, as form is the only principle subsisting in common between nature and all these modes of representation, it seems evident that character resides in form alone. As we find that a known

countenance is recognized the moment it meets our eyes, before there can have been time to attend to the detail of the features; it is plain that character must be seated rather in the general form of the whole, than in the particulars of the parts. In confirmation of this, the general appearance of a face, such as it assumes if viewed by twilight, when all the subordinate parts are lost and blended into the more general forms, will in representation convey likeness almost as well as where all the detail of features and particulars are accurately defined: the absence of the inferior parts will not materially affect the likeness, provided those preserved are correct in their figure, proportion, and situation, with respect to one another.

As these circumstances constitute general form; does it not follow that the leading principles of individual character reside in them?—Attention to these particulars, the figure, proportion, and relative situation of the principal parts, is therefore of the utmost importance in the preservation of character: any defect in them is totally destructive of likeness, whatever accuracy may seem to subsist in the more minute parts; for the want of a due observance in this point, though the heads in a print may bear a very accurate comparison with the picture, and to a close observer appear perfectly correct, they will, nevertheless, on a more distant and general sur-

vey, be found but weakly to convey the character of the original. In finishing the detailed particulars, no small care is required to preserve their characteristic consistency with the general appearance of the whole countenance, without which they will counteract and contradict the more powerful impression produced by the general effect.

If we explore the seat of character more narrowly, I apprehend we shall find there is a peculiarity of line which pervades both the general and particular formation of each countenance, on which its character principally depends, and of which the arrangement of the parts is a consequence.

Such a principle, I much believe, exists partly native, and partly generated by the expression the countenance has been most habitually impressed with during the time of growth. Thus different degrees of character will be produced according to the mental apathy or sensibility of the subject, and the susceptibility of the features to receive the impression.

Again; the character may impress the countenance in greater or less degrees according to the consistency or inconsistency of characteristic line, and innumerable other causes. The nice distinctions and incalculable variations of line that must of necessity ensue from such a system in the endless distinction of human countenance, would

completely elude the observation and baffle the investigation of the artist, if there were not a nearer way to the accomplishment of his purpose in the representation of character. To express this, I know no term more appropriate than to call it *feeling for* the character; for the artist feels a strong sentiment of the peculiarity of look, if I may be allowed the expression; and working under the influence of this feeling, the impression the mind has received by the eye, operates in the hand, and impresses the production with the image it had conceived. Under this sort of influence, art represents more than matter; and thus works of high merit become replete with mind: for character is the offspring of animation; it is the emanation of the soul, with which the mind of the artist is to correspond, and thence conceive the feeling that will enable him to transfer its expression from nature to the canvass, or from the canvass to the copper. Where this influence is in action, the vivacity and vigour of animation are preserved, displayed, seen, and felt; but where it is not in exercise, even though accuracy may retain something of the likeness, it will be insipid and uninteresting; the eye will view it with indifference, and the impression will sink no deeper.

Exaggeration of the peculiarities and misproportion of the countenance will often convey likeness so strongly, (I might perhaps have said vio-

lently,) that I have heard it sometimes said of such resemblances, that they are more like the persons they represent, than they are like themselves: a mode of expression, which, though absurd, is not altogether unintelligible; and we understand by it, that they are marked with the distinguishing quality in an increased degree. Yet this is not true character; such a portrait would never give satisfaction to the friends of the party represented, who are best acquainted with the original: for friendship and affection always contemplate even the countenance of those they esteem, with a favourable eye; and exaggeration has always, more or less, a ridiculous effect, and in the extreme, often a disgusting one.

Now, to the Engraver, every head is a portrait; for he has to produce its likeness, and preserve its character, which exaggeration will never improve in the eye of the Painter, who surely is the best judge, and who beholds all the countenances he paints, with the partial fondness of a parent for his offspring.

Nothing like true character, is ever purchased at the expence of proportion and propriety of form: these constitute its proper limits; all beyond them lies in the wild region of caricature.

Though I conceive form to be the sole seat of character, I would not be understood as confounding character and form together. Whoever looks into his own mind, and there contemplates

the idea he has of the look or character of a countenance, will find it quite distinct from his idea of the shape of the face, considered as a complex figure. Two forms as complex, and at the same time as nearly allied, as two faces generally are, could not be distinguished but by close comparison and attentive examination: but character distinguishes them at the slightest glance. Mere form is with difficulty retained on the memory, or recalled to the recollection: but character imprints on the imagination so lively a picture, that we recall it without hesitation or consideration. Yet, clearly as we recollect the character; if we would figure to ourselves the shape and situation of the features of a face, we find the remembrance of them very imperfect. Let any one try to draw the countenance he remembers the character of, and he will soon be convinced how little he recollects of its form. Some indeed, impelled by a strong feeling for character, draw characteristic likeness from memory: but though the resemblance be known and acknowledged; yet if compared with the faces intended to be represented, we are surprized at their incorrectness, and are thereby furnished with an additional proof that character is something more than shape and figure, and seems rather to be an effect produced by form, than a modification of form itself; as colour is an effect produced by the impulse of light upon our organs, yet we perceive no ana-

logy between our ideas of impulse and the colour. But whatever be the essence of character, its origin and effects are purely intellectual, impressed by mind on matter: it is thence communicated to the mind of the artist; and, infused by the efforts of his mind into the productions of his art, it operates by them on the mind of the beholder. Character is the soul of art; form, but the body: it is the vivifying principle that announces the presence of mind; and simple form, like torpid matter, lies inactive and inanimate, till character, sentiment, and expression, breathe into its essence the breath of life.

It is not enough that the countenance be marked by a powerful principle of distinction: to distinguish is not the only office incumbent on character; it is the medium that discloses the mental powers, habitual dispositions, and secret inclinations of the persons represented: and hence it has its name. It is not enough, therefore, that the countenances in a picture, or a print, amuse us by their variety; they must interest us by their propriety. In historical art, it is not necessary that the countenances should be portraits of those whom they represent; it is sufficient that each represent the character of the person intended, and discover to whom it belongs by its intellectual resemblance.

While speaking of propriety of character, I must not suffer the distinctions of age and sex to

pass unnoticed. Clearly to depict each time of life, and distinguish it by its most interesting attribute; to preserve manly beauty free from effeminacy, and present female dignity devoid of masculine assurance; are merits the excellence and necessity of which are universally admitted: but frequent failure in these points evinces the difficulty of their attainment.

In the general survey of Nature, character is almost all the eye takes cognizance of: those objects are therefore most eligible for representation by art, on which character stamps the strongest expression.—In the delineation of the inanimate part of creation, this principle constitutes the connecting medium between nature and its representative art; and the picture or print has pretensions to excellence in proportion as it is rich in this essence of distinction, in the higher departments of art. Character, as has been remarked, is the principle of animation; likeness, the primary intention and ultimate end of portrait, is founded in character alone; and in the nobler walk of History, it is the seat and source of all that is intellectual, intelligent, and interesting. How eminent, then, the importance of its study to the artist in the representation of nature at large! Characteristic form is the principal, I had almost said the only thing he has to represent; the identical particulars and minutiæ of nature being but little concerned or considered in this

kind of representation: and it is through this medium alone he is enabled to select, diversify, and delineate the objects he has to execute. In animated art, it is this that calls forth genius, excites its efforts, displays its energies, and exalts its powers.

Character, though pre-eminent in the countenance, is not confined thereto. In drawing the naked figure, we find a corresponding consistency pervade the whole. Due attention to this is the best antidote I know of against contracting manner in academical drawing. In nature, the hand of one will not with propriety match with the head of another; every part of the figure must be consistent with the face: the influence of character even pervades the dress, and appears in the attitude, governs the motions, and determines the turn of the figure: and, to render the character complete, the deportment, the air, the action, must all correspond and be consistent.

Besides that character which distinguishes individuals by its variety, and assimilates them by its repetition, the human countenance is marked by a variety of changes produced by and corresponding with the sentiments, passions, and emotions of the mind: this is called expression; and here a wide field of study expands itself before us, better calculated to occupy the body of a discourse, than the contracted limits of a subordinate member. Thus circumscribed, a few observations

are all that can be included. In every production of art, expression is the sole seat of the pathos; it is this alone awakens our sympathy: we feel not for those who appear not to feel for themselves; but wherever we find the sensations and emotions of the mind faithfully depicted, though but in fiction or representation, we never fail to experience something of the effect which the reality of those expressions is accustomed to excite.

Expression is distinct from character, in that the latter is the effect of the permanent shape and relative situation of the features; but the former is produced by their temporary alteration. This distinction deserves our particular regard: it is an error to attempt to increase the expression by exaggeration of character and misproportion of the parts: anger, fear, and most of the furious passions, widely extend the eyelids; yet still the opened eye is very distinguishable from the eye naturally large and misproportioned; and yet this false resource of assisting the expression is often resorted to, without considering that wherever proportion is sacrificed, caricature is the consequence. As was said of character, so of expression; it is not confined to the face, but affects the whole frame, and, in the display of the violent passions, marks the naked figure with powerful impression.

The best school to study character in, is Nature: for there alone it originates, and from that

source alone it can be drawn: but though its variety be inexhaustible, it affords no examples of perfection; the most excellent productions of art are worthy our attention to direct us in the choice of nature, and to stand as examples, not for us to imitate, but emulate; or if the elevated superiority of their merits deter us from such presumption, at least to encourage us by the example of their success, and to place us in that path wherein they approached so near perfection.

To enumerate all that latter ages have produced worthy to be considered, of instructive authority, would be to convert the remainder of the Lecture into a catalogue of names: the painters of the Italian schools, and the engravers of the French, furnish the best examples: but in this, as in every thing else that relates to true taste, the remains of ancient Grecian art afford the best instructors to direct us in the discrimination between the excellent and the defective, thus to obtain a just judgment in character.

We do well to study variety from nature; selection from the best examples of modern art, and perfection from the antique. With a few remarks on the latter of these authorities we will conclude this Lecture. In the perfect productions of ancient Greece the intrepidity of their heroes, the wisdom of their lawgivers and philosophers, the inflexibility of their patriots, the genius of

their poets, so strongly impress the countenances on their busts and statues, as sometimes to leave a doubt whether they were originally portraits of the men whose names they bear, or whether they are not personified representations of their characters, works, and actions. Thus we may enquire, — Does this bust [here he shewed the bust] represent Homer, as he appeared in his lifetime, or is it an ideal personification of the sublime author of the Iliad? I confess, I am inclined to the latter opinion; and admire it as the finest representation I have ever seen of human wisdom, combined with its concomitants, age and infirmity. Here [still pointing to the bust of Homer] we have a man, on whose countenance intense study and profound thought have ploughed deep furrows; where strong-marked character has been imprinted by the operations of a vigorous mind, to which the exterior frame has yielded as to superior force: the composed look of sedate reflection stamped on the wrinkled features of extreme age, convey the sentiment of experience, and call forth the profoundest reverence; while the imbecility of human nature sinking under the withering hand of time, awaken our sympathy, and engage our veneration.

Yet, completely as the antients shewed herein the power of art to impress the human mind upon the countenance, they rested not here, but aspired to higher excellence, and presumed to represent the

attribute of absolute perfection in the abstract. Such is their Jupiter [here he produced the large bust of Jupiter Capitolinus,] exhibiting the experience of age, divested of its imbecility; its wisdom, without its wrinkles; serenity, without tameness; seriousness, without severity; mild and dispassionate, yet dignified and commanding; the countenance of a being more than man; one whose power resides in his will, and in whom the exertion of the one is productive of the other.

Such was the conception the antients had of character. With equal powers and with equal success did they arrest the fugitive appearance and momentary point of passing action. The magnitude of their statues prevents my placing an example before you: but some of the principal figures are so universally known, as to render such an exhibition hardly necessary. I will, therefore, without that assistance, call to your recollection the figure which in this respect excels all others; the Gladiator rushing naked to the combat, with all the powers of body and soul impelled to action, left dependent on the strength and activity of his own powers alone; his sword the umpire, and his life the stake. In that tremendous moment, the vigorous imagination of the artist has conceived him in all the energy of action, every muscle straining, every sinew starting, every nerve on the stretch; and at that important moment seized, bound, and for ever fixed the instantaneous point.

Nor did their powers of expression sink below the high standard of their general excellence, though their reverence for character, and care to preserve beauty, often checked the fervour of their genius. So far were they from sacrificing these to extravagant expression, they appear to have fallen into the opposite extreme, and have weakened their expression, to preserve character and beauty unimpaired. Even the head of Niobè witnessing the destruction of her children, exhibits more beauty than distress; and excites rather our admiration than our pity. But when they did exert their mighty efforts, their powerful pathos penetrated every heart. In the group of Laocöon and his sons, we have the expression of unutterable anguish, both mental and corporeal; not confined to the countenance alone, though there powerfully pourtrayed in all the misery of distress; but equally exhibited in the clenched toes, the agonizing grasp, the convulsive contraction of every muscle, nerve, and fibre, throughout the shuddering frame; that horror mingled with admiration suspends our feelings of pleasure over the verge of pain, and the astonished beholder trembles on the confines of terror and delight.

But when the super-human sentiments became the daring subject of their presumptuous art, they seem to have avoided the expression of a perturbed mind as derogatory to the dignity of a powerful,

wise, and happy being; but still steering aloof from tameness and insensibility, they represented them as animated by pleasing, mild, and dignified sensations. Such was their Jupiter; and such their Apollo, triumphing in his conquest over the Python;—elated without emotion, exulting without agitation, and blending benign serenity with triumphant joy.

THE THIRD LECTURE.

THE discourse I am about to read, I have written under the pressure of continual indisposition; and must deliver it under the influence of the same inconvenience. Aware that what is labour to myself, must even on that account be proportionably tedious to you, I have judged it prudent to contract this Lecture much within the limits to which discourses of this kind usually extend. Permit me therefore to solicit all the candour and indulgence this consideration can induce to the general imperfection that, I am conscious, must attend both the diction and delivery; and entreat your acceptance of this my very imperfect service, rather as a proof of my willingness than of my ability to fulfil my engagement with this Institution.

In my last Lecture, I called your attention to the consideration of Character at large: we will now confine our attention to a particular branch of that subject, which operates on the beholder to the ex-

citement of delight and admiration; and explore the principles of those forms that fascinate the eye and captivate the heart in the display of beauty, grace, and elegance.

We approach the temple of the Graces through the portico of Symmetry and Order; for, elegance cannot subsist, nor beauty be distinguished, in the intricacy of confusion. To arrange the irregular, simplify the complex, and regulate the confused, is therefore the first step towards the introduction of elegance and the discovery of beauty.

On the first exercise of the organs of sensation at our birth, they discover nothing but a chaos of indistinct ideas: to separate and arrange them, is an art acquired by habit, regulated by judgment, and matured by experience. Something of this skill being attained before memory begins the register of its records, we find ourselves unconscious of its commencement, and often fancy it innate. Our progress and proficiency in this primitive science, are proportioned to the extent of our capacities, the excellence of our organs, the variety of objects that come within the sphere of their observation, and the intensity of our attention in the contemplation of those objects. The extent of our attainment in this faculty is commonly commensurate to the necessity we are under of classing and distinguishing our ideas for our use and convenience: therefore most people stop

short when they have attained the power of the arrangement and discrimination of their ideas, sufficiently for the exercise of their respective functions in the necessary purposes of life.

But the artist and the man of taste have yet much farther to go. For, much that makes on the untutored eye the impression of confusion, must to them be so arranged, that each part may be reduced to its proper situation, and claim only its due portion of attention, before it can be delineated with skill, or admired with judgment. To the common observer, a tree presents no other idea than that of an irregular figure, terminated by an infinite variety of unequal indentations, encompassing a confused surface checkered all over by the light and shadow of its foliage: but the eye of Art contemplates it as composed of an assemblage of several principal branches; those, as divided into subordinate boughs; each subdivided into inferior twigs; the subordination ending in the leaves: and by this arrangement, it becomes intelligible to the eye, and capable of regular representation.

This, then, is the principle of subordination of form. To render my meaning more perspicuous, I will illustrate it by another example.—A cluster of grapes is composed of several inferior bunches: divide them, each division is still reducible to the same principle, and the subordination may be continued till we come to the individual grape. This principle is applicable to whatever confuses the

mind by its complexity at first sight; as drapery, which, however varied, may be reduced to a few large divisions or predominant folds; each of these may be divided into inferior ones; and these may be subdivided again if necessary. By this method, forms the most capricious and irregular are reducible to comprehensible order and intelligible arrangement; so that, to the well-instructed eye, nothing is totally lost in irrecoverable confusion; though forms approach nearer to that state, the less they are reducible to this system of subordination. Which however should never be so evident as for every eye to trace its influence, lest formality be the consequence.

This principle is further applicable to the construction of ornamental form; which should always consist of good general forms, broken, but not destroyed by their division into subordinate members: and again it is applicable to the delineation of the human figure, where the general contour is the first and grand consideration; then, the superior lines that describe the larger portions of the outline; and, lastly, the inferior, whereof each general sweep is composed. Thus from the shoulders to the loins, from the hip to the knee, from the knee to the ankle, are general predominant forms; and may be considered entire and independent of the inferior lines that constitute their subordinate members.

Before we quit this part of our subject, it is worthy of remark, that though accuracy of form is in no case to be neglected; yet the general portions of form have a far more important claim on our attention, than their subordinate divisions; which have no value any longer than they are considered as parts of a superior whole.

Having thus discussed the arrangement of form, we will next proceed to the examination and comparison of its construction; thereby to discover what forms are to be preferred, and why. We defined beauty to be that branch of Character, that excites delight and admiration in the mind of the beholder. If, then, we can trace what those principles are, that produce those emotions in the human mind; we may thereby discover the constituent elements of this enchanting quality. The principal source of pleasure in the mind of man, I take to be, variety: it is this gives melody to musick, relish to flavour, fragrance to odour, and beauty to form and colour. Continued sameness and frequent repetition render the fragrant scent offensive, the most palateable viands disgusting; annoy with the sweetest sounds, and deprive form and colour of all their power to please. Even where variety has produced delight, the mind, still restless, remains discontented: it seeks not change, but it desires increase. Hence the delight that accompanies the swelling tone that steals upon the ear with gradual augmentation, then dies away

dissolved in delicacy: we first enjoy the increasing sound, and then the increasing sweetness. These seem to be the principles of delight, unconfined in their operation to the medium of any particular organ: for what pleases by the ear, can easily find its parallel by the eye.

Assuming, then, that gradually increasing variety is the first principle of delight; and that this principle operating in form is the foundation of beauty, I proceed to illustrate, and, if possible, confirm my assertion. A straight line is one of the simplest ideas the eye furnishes to the understanding: it has no pretensions either to beauty or deformity, from either of which it is equally remote, they being the effects of form well or ill diversified. While straightness is the most unvaried idea we can ever have of form, curvature has the advantage of straightness, because every part of a curved line varies its direction: therefore curved lines are the most proper for describing beautiful form. The circular curve is the least varied; for though its direction continually changes, it is by an equable deviation from rectitude; which renders it inferior in elegance to the spiral line, whose curvature is constantly increasing. And this is again excelled by the elliptic curve, whose flexure is not only continually increased, but that increase continually accelerated.

Delightful as the principle of beauty is to the eye, satiety is the consequence of its constant

repetition: the mind, ever intent on variety, becomes surfeited with all flowing lines, and from a desire for change, acquires a relish for straight lines and angles: these relieve the eye, as discords relieve the ear satiated with harmony: whence arise the beauties of contrasted form. Contrast seizes by surprise, and keeps attention awake by boldness of opposition: nature abounds with both, and thereby obtains our admiration.

The drooping willow hanging at rest in the dead calm, delights by the easy sweep of its pendent boughs; the cypress, the poplar, and the pine, formed of lines gently curved, gradually converging as they ascend, and tapering to a point, please by their graceful figure; the umbrageous oak and towering elm, in all the majesty of magnitude, amaze by the grandeur of their capacious forms. The graceful swan, her arched neck between her white wings mantling; or the lovely peacock, on whose neck and breast the rival beauties of form and colour contend for admiration. How fine a curve is described by the neck of the majestic war-horse! what graceful lines are displayed throughout his whole structure! all reducible to the principle of gradually increasing curvature.

Nor is nature furnished with fewer examples in the display of contrast. The craggy rock is opposed to the bright polished fluid that flows at its feet: the rough and rugged trunk is contrasted with the

smooth leaves and delicate blossoms that complete the tree. The interior folds of drapery are broken and angular; forming a contrast to the selvage or border, which winds in meandering curves, and flows with easy flexure: and the swelling line of flexible muscle is varied with the straighter and stiffer form of bone in the outline of animal formation.

Hitherto we have attended to beauty as inherent in form abstractedly considered. We will now enquire what foreign aids contribute to its formation. Most of our ideas of delight or disgust flow more from the ideas we associate with an object, than from its own inherent qualities: no action is awkward that is performed with ease, nor any form ungraceful that is well adapted to the use for which it is intended. The human skeleton, though hideous to the ignorant, who connect no idea with it but the abhorred one of death, attracts the admiration of the anatomist, as beautiful in its appropriation, and exquisite in its contrivance. Beauty of form is therefore but of little value further than for mere ornamental purposes, except it be combined with propriety; and therefore requires to be composed on the principle of increasing variety so modified as will best accord with the use and convenience of the subject.

This constitutes the basis of proportion, which is nothing more than the comparative length,

breadth, and bulk of the parts of a figure whose limbs are well adapted to their intended use. Thus strength, elegance, and agility, will dictate different proportions in the representation of a Hercules, an Apollo, and a Mercury: for proportion is the result of fitness, and not fitness of proportion.

By this time, I apprehend, I may consider the enquiry as gone forth,—How is this dissertation on Form connected with Engraving?—If I were asked, what was the first and principal thing necessary for an Engraver to learn? I would reply, to draw well. If it were inquired, to what should the admirer of prints direct his first attention, in order to form his judgment of their merits? I would answer, to the outline; for where that is good, the print cannot be a bad one: for good drawing will more than counterbalance every other defect, at the same time that it enhances whatever other merit the print may possess; while it must be confessed no other merit can ever sufficiently compensate for deficiency in this most essential article. Now fine forms and just proportions include all that is understood by good drawing; and these I have endeavoured to trace back to their fountain-head, from an opinion I entertain that it was the method pursued by the artists of antiquity; who, finding from experience that certain forms had the exclusive property of exciting pleasure in the beholder, or, in other words,

were ornamental, made it their study to ascertain which they were, and what was the principle of their operation; the discovery of beautiful lines, and the effect of their combination, taught them which forms to employ and which to reject in their works of art, and thus to produce beauty in the abstract. This system they carried to that degree of perfection, that, even in a combination of unmeaning forms, they evinced so much taste, that thousands of years have elapsed without any man being able to say of any part of it, "This might be improved." I refer more especially to the capital of the Corinthian column.

I have in these Lectures so often insisted on the importance of fine drawing, that to expatiate further on the subject would be idle and impertinent; nor should I have taken up your time with this digression, if I had not conceived it necessary to represent its importance as a sufficient apology for my devoting a whole Lecture to the investigation of its principles. I now return to the subject of my discourse, and proceed to the more particular consideration of the human figure; leaving it to my auditors to make the application of my observations to Engraving, without interrupting their attention with repeated allusions to the subject.

The human figure, in its utmost perfection, is an assemblage of exquisitely beautiful forms

connected in more elegant union, and forming a more graceful combination than any other object the eye can behold: the outline in every position is constructed of convex curves, all formed on the principle we have been explaining, of increasing curvature; and is diversified with all the variety that can complete the model of perfect taste. The principal swell of the curve is in some instances at one end; then it may be seen at the other; sometimes at both ends, and at others in the middle of the line; the whole being supported by such perfect fitness and propriety as would impart beauty to any form: through all this extensive variety no instance occurs of a straight line, parallel lines, or any part of a regular mathematical form, except in the eye, where we find a perfect circle. In the formation of every limb, the most delicate contrast is exhibited by the opposite outlines; no two projections or recesses are opposed to each other, giving the limb the bulky swell of a ballustrade; nor is each recess placed so exactly against its corresponding projection as thereby to produce parallelism; but each is so adjusted to the other, as to confer the serpentine sweep of grace without injury to the general rectitude.

The delineation of the human figure admitting of three degrees of beauty: I will distinguish them by the appellations of *common nature, perfect nature*, and *ideal form*.

By *common nature* I mean that character of drawing, or kind of figure, which nature on the average commonly presents, on the one hand free from deformity or conspicuous defect, on the other aspiring to no peculiar beauty of appearance or perfection of form; and always including tolerably just proportions. This is the highest excellence to be expected by those who carry their studies no farther than mere drawing from nature.—Drawing the human figure from living models, is an excellent and very necessary part of an artist's education, as far as it goes: he thereby becomes acquainted with all the different appearances which nature assumes under all the varieties of position and attitude; and thereby he acquires freedom, and divests himself of the stiffness that is too often contracted by a constant study from stone or plaster statues. I mean not to depreciate this part of academical education; but I must contend that the student's aim should lie far beyond, and his view be fixed far higher in the ascent of art than this. It is of consequence he should be acquainted with and capable of delineating perfect nature.

Perfection has but a very partial existence in nature: at the best, in one figure the front is excellent, of another the back; the legs of some, and the arms of others: but, a figure equally perfect in all its parts has perhaps never existed. Hence the story of a painter of antiquity combining the

beauties of five different women, to give perfection to his goddess. This seems to have been the course of study in ancient Greece; her artists having acquired taste and judgment sufficient to discover that in the most beautiful models they could procure, some parts were excellent, and others comparatively defective. Hence they concluded that the complete perfection which nature no-where afforded in the whole, art might attain by uniting its scattered beauties; and having discovered what would render each part the most perfect in its kind, they studied to have their figures composed of such parts only.

The finest specimen of this kind remaining, I take to be the Fighting Gladiator, which represents the perfect form of man without blemish or defect, in the momentary exertion of all its powers.

High as this statue ranks in the scale of excellence, the ancients saw perfection still far beyond them. The perfection of human form was sufficient for the representation of a mortal; but when they presumed to represent divinity, the superhuman character demanded more: to attain this, they considered what it was made beauty beautiful, so as to extract its essence and delineate the ideal being in the abstract beauty of human form, divested of all the imperfections derived from the infirmities and even the necessities of human nature. This is what I call *ideal form*: it exists

in nature, as honey found in the flower,—in its principle alone, perceptible only to the chymic bee that can extract the sweet. Here it is that art surpasses nature, and is no longer imitative, but ceasing to copy the models of creation, arrests the thought, and clothes the fleeting ideas with permanent existence; brings to birth the children of the imagination, and renders the ideal sensible. Whilst we tread in nature's footsteps, it is imitation points the path before us: but when we enter the flowery field of fancy, what shall the Painter imitate but his own bold creation? nature has forsaken him: a very different case from that of the painter who forsakes nature: he no longer treads the beaten track, but soars above it. His deities assume a human form, but not a natural one: it must be composed of beauty in the abstract: all grace, all grandeur, nature furnishes no such examples; and even in these romantic regions, the Engraver must accompany him, supported by the same feelings, and actuated by the same taste: for mere manual ingenuity is insufficient of itself to represent the effusion of mental energy; and he that cannot conceive the ideal form, can neither perceive its taste, nor preserve its sublimity.

The three degrees of drawing may be illustrated by comparison with language: common nature is equivalent to common conversation; good sense is its highest praise; and it is formed for use rather than ornament.

Perfect nature, like the polished language of our best writers for the press, excites our admiration when applied to subjects of superior consequence; but would become ridiculous pedantry and affectation, if used in the common concerns of life. Ideal form is the verse of art, and only applicable to works of genius and flights of fancy.

Is it expected I should farther explain wherein the nature of ideal form consists? It were as easy to define the limits of fancy, or to describe the charms of song; all that lies in my power is to refer to the ancient statues of the Grecian deities: such are the Torso, the Apollo Belvedere, and the Venus de Medicis, as presenting the most eminent examples. If I were to venture a few remarks on them, I might observe, that the outline everywhere presents great length of convex forms exquisitely beautiful in their construction; that the predominance of general forms is preserved with vast superiority; and that all inferior considerations, as starting veins, wrinkles of the skin, &c. are carefully avoided; but any adequate idea of essence of the form that gives the divine grace to the whole and every part, is incommunicable by language, and that study is well employed that obtains a knowledge of it even by diligent observation.

The last degree of beauty, that form can assume, is that which characterizes the human countenance: but here, as we observed before of

character, something more than matter operates on the spectator to awaken those sentiments which form is as incapable of exciting, as matter is of motion: the delicacy of female softness, or the grace of manly dignity, convey to the mind the sentiments of tender sensibility and of deliberate wisdom: sentiments both in their origin and impression perfectly intellectual, though conveyed by a material vehicle. It is this has established the countenance as the prime seat of beauty: that it is not only nature's master-piece both in form and colour, but is calculated to receive, and display in the fullest perfection, the impression of all that is amiable in the human mind. The study of this branch of beauty forms at once both the most delightful and important part of the artist's education; the execution of it excites the truest delight, and ensures the warmest admiration. Happy in this particular the artists of England; to whom nature is more bountiful of her best examples than to all other countries besides.

From the preceding observations, I would infer that the study of form is most necessary to the attainment of excellence in art in general, and in Engraving in particular. All we know of Grecian art is form: and this alone has entitled it to the fame of perfection. The best method whereby to attain judgment and execution in this fundamental principle of all art, is the attentive study of the works of nature where she presents her best beauties,

and those of art where they are most judiciously selected, not merely with a view to imitation, but to develope principle and explore its surest source; for imitation can never produce originality, the first marks of a master.

Highly and justly as we admire the arts of ancient Greece; yet, if ever artist again reach the summit of that stupendous height, it must be rather by the imitation of their principles and practice, than of their productions; it must be by principles as pure, efforts as strenuous, perseverance as indefatigable, and views of perfection as correct, as those that gave the arts of Greece that proud pre-eminence that has paralized succeeding ages with hopeless despair, instead of inspiring a spirit of emulation. Carefully to examine their best productions, diligently to draw from them, intently to study them, is using them to good purpose: but it should not be merely to learn their forms by heart, but to reduce them to their first principles; to make those our own by exertion as arduous and unwearied; and to apply them to purposes as elevated and as admirable in their end; ever remembering that perfection is the only object worthy of a wise man's aim, though the attainment of it can never become the subject of his expectations or his hope. While thus proposing perfection as the proper aim and end of art, I cannot deny myself the vanity of asserting, what I hope will be allowed me, as a justifiable truth, that no department of art in this country has ever ap-

proached so near this inaccessible point, as that to which all observations in these Lectures are intended more immediately to apply. If evidence be wanting to verify the assertion, may I not fairly affirm, without fear of contradiction, that no Englishman has ever produced works of art so perfect as the prints of Woollet? But still perfection flies before us untaken,—I hope not undeveloped: for though the object be unattainable, the chace is not fruitless, if excellence, admiration, and fame reward the toil.

Earnestly as I would counsel the artist to seek perfection, I would yet caution the admirer of art not to expect it; but ever to remember that imperfection is the distinguishing mark that stamps all human productions.

Hence, candid criticks, this sad truth confess'd:
Receive what least is bad, and deem it best;
Lament the soul in error's thraldom held;
Compare life's span with Art's extensive field:
Know that, ere perfect taste matures the mind,
Or perfect practice to that taste be join'd,
Comes age, comes sickness, comes contracting pain,
And chills the warmth of youth in every vein.

FINIS.

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